

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SAA-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 ICA-11 IO-13 /090 W
-----038106 150643Z /23/10

P R 131351Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8701
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY BONN

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT CORRECTED)

E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PINT LE
SUBJ: CHAMOUN VILIFIES THE PRESIDENT

1. SUMMARY: CAMILLE CHAMOUN HAS SENT AN OPEN LETTER TO PRESIDENT SARKIS, BOTH CRITICIZING THE PRESIDENT FOR THREATENING TO RESIGN AND IMPLYING HE HAS IN THE RECENT PAST ACQUIESCED IN THE "TYRANNICAL BEHAVIOR OF THE SYRIANS." CHAMOUN WRITES, "I WILL NOT GO TO BAABDA, AND I WILL NOT TELL YOU TO GO AHEAD WITH YOUR RESIGNATION OR TO WITHDRAW IT." BEIRUT PRESS HAS REACTED NEGATIVELY. END SUMMARY.

2. FOLLOWING IS COMPLETE TEXT OF CHAMOUN'S LETTER, AS TRANSLATED BY IKE JULY 13:

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3. BEGIN QUOTE: "YOUR EXCELLENCY.
"THE UNEXPECTED REPORT ABOUT YOUR RESIGNATION HAD SOME REPERCUSSIONS IN INTERNATIONAL CIRCLES AND THE WORLD'S PRESS AND BROADCASTING STATIONS, AND IT CAUSED DEEP DISTRESS AMONG THE LEBANESE PEOPLE, YOUNG

AND OLD, MALE AND FEMALE, PROFESSIONALS, STUDENTS AND MERCHANTS.

"THOSE LEBANESE PEOPLE, WHO FOUGHT AND OFFERED THEIR LIVES FOR THE DIGNITY AND GLORY OF THEIR HOMELAND, TO LIBERATE IT FROM THE DOMINATION OF IGNORANCE AND BACKWARDNESS - THOSE OF THEM WHO ARE ALIVE AND THE MARTYRS AMONG THEM WHO WERE KILLED BY SYRIAN GUNS - HAVE THE RIGHT TO HEAR FROM YOU, IF ONLY ONCE, A DETAILED STATEMENT EXPLAINING THE REASONS WHICH LED YOU TO THIS GRAVE DECISION.

"YOU, HOWEVER, HAVE OPTED FOR FLIGHT RATHER THAN ENDURANCE, LEAVING THE LEBANESE PEOPLE IN THE DARK AND FLINGING THE DOORS WIDE OPEN TO SPECULATION AND DOUBT.

"THERE ARE SOME, FOR INSTANCE, WHO SAY THAT YOU WERE FULLY AWARE OF EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED, AND THAT, IN AGREEMENT WITH THE SYRIAN DETERRENT FORCES, YOU ACTED OUT THE SAME DIRTY DRAMA THAT WAS PERFORMED IN AYN AR-RUMMANEH, FURN ESH-SHEBBAK AND BADARO STREET.

"AND THERE ARE SOME WHO SAY THAT YOUR RESIGNATION WAS IN PROTEST AGAINST THE TYRANNICAL BEHAVIOR OF THE SYRIANS IN AL-QAA, RAS BAALBECK, JDEIDET AL-FAKIHA,
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AYN AR-RUMMANEH AND ASHRAFIYAH.

"ASSUMING THAT THIS IS TRUE, IT WAS YOUR DUTY TO EXPLAIN THE SITUATION TO LEBANESE AND INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC OPINION AND TO DEMAND THE DEPARTURE OF THE DETERRENT FORCES, INSTEAD OF DEPARTING YOURSELF.

"THERE HAVE BEEN TWO RESIGNATION ATTEMPTS IN THE HISTORY OF THE LEBANESE PRESIDENCE. THE FIRST WAS BY MR. FUAD CHEHAB ON JULY 20, 1960, AND THAT WAS A CHEAP MANEUVER BY SECRET SERVICE AGENCIES TO REGAIN (THE PRESIDENT'S) LOST POPULARITY. THIS WAS FOLLOWED, A FEW YEARS AGO, BY THE RESIGNATION ATTEMPT OF MR CHARLES HELOU, WHICH WAS AN EXPRESSION OF HIS HELPLESSNESS IN THE FACE OF THE VIOLATIONS COMMITTED BY THE SAME (SECRET SERVICE) AGENCIES AGAINST THE CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITIES.

"YOUR RESIGNATION TODAY COMES IN THE MOST DANGEROUS STAGE LEBANON HAS EVER GONE THROUGH, WITH BOMBS FALLING AND FIRES CONSUMING HOMES AND INSTITUTIONS, IMPERVIOUSLY (SIC) AND MERCILESSLY KILLING HUNDREDS OF CITIZENS.

"DO YOU THINK THAT THIS ACTION OF YOURS IS THE ACTION
OF A RESPONSIBLE PRESIDENT AND LEADER?

"DO YOU THINK THAT YOUR BEHAVIOR HAS BEEN THE
BEHAVIOR OF THE COURAGEOUS CAPTAIN WHO EITHER SACRIFICES
EVERYTHING HE HAS TO SAVE HIS SHIP OR GOES DOWN WITH
IT, NOBLY AND HONORABLY?

"I WILL NOT GO TO BAABDA, AND I WILL NOT
TELL YOU TO GO AHEAD WITH YOUR RESIGNATION OR TO WITH-
DRAW IT. THE CHOICE, YOUR EXCELLENCY, IS YOURS: YOU
CAN EITHER BE A FULL LEBANESE OR JOIN THE RANKS OF THE
HALF-LEBANESE. RESPECTFULLY, CAMILLE CHAMOUN." END QUOTE.
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H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
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P R 131351Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
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4. PRESS REACTION: IKE JULY 13 DEVOTED ITS EDITORIAL

TO THE CHAMOUN LETTER: " . . . THE LETTER DOES POSE RELEVANT QUESTIONS: WHY DOESN'T THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC EXERCISE THE AUTHORITY VESTED IN HIM . . . ? IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS ARE EMBODIED IN THE MAN WHO ASKED THEM. FOUR DAYS AGO MR. CHAMOUN TOLD NEWSMEN . . . "I RESPECT THE AUTHORITIES, BUT I WILL OPPOSE ANY WRONG DECISIONS THEY MAKE" . . . WHO DECIDES WHAT IS RIGHT OR WRONG? MR. CHAMOUN. HOW DOES MR. CHAMOUN OPPOSE WRONG DECISIONS? WITH HIS MILITIAS." THE SAHAFIYA NEWS AGENCY SAID THAT CHAMOUN'S LETTER WAS PROMOTED BY SARKIS' REFUSAL TO REPLACE PRIME MINISTER HOSS WITH A MARONITE, AND THAT SARKIS SAID THAT SUCH A STEP WOULD BE UNCONSTITUTIONAL IN SPITE OF THE 1952 PRECEDENT.

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5. LEFTIST AL-LIWA SAID THAT PARLIAMENTARY SOURCES VARIOUSLY ARE ATTRIBUTING CHAMOUN'S LETTER TO THREE FACTORS: (1) CHAMOUN HAS GOTTEN A POSITIVE SIGNAL, EITHER FROM THE U.S. OR FROM ISRAEL, TO MAKE A NEW MOVE ON THE LEBANESE POLITICAL SCENE; (2) CHAMOUN IS REACTING TO SARKIS' REFUSAL TO RESIGN AS HE AND PIERRE GEMAYEL HAD PROPOSED; AND (3) CHAMOUN "IS SUFFERING FROM A MATERIAL AND MORAL SIEGE AND HE IS FACING IT WITH A GLOOMY AND DESPERATE LOGIC." AL-LIWA EDITORIALIZED THAT CHAMOUN'S LETTER AND SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE KAMEL ASAD'S RETURN FROM DAMASCUS (APPARENTLY WITHOUT GOOD NEWS) INDICATE THAT THE CRISIS WILL COME TO A HEAD WITHIN THE NEXT TWO DAYS.

DECONTROL 12/31/78.
PARKER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
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Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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TAGS: PINT, PGOV, LE, (CHAMOUN, CAMILLE), (SARKIS, ELIAS)
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